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THE MISSION OF COL. JOHN LAURENS TO
EUROPE IN 1781.

[Continued from the January number.]

[20.]

I have had the Honour of writing your Excellency twice since your arrival in Europe stating part of y^e causes hitherto of my delay with y^e Ship South Carolina under my direction in the service of the State of South Carolina those causes are ripening to y^e overthrow of y^e pleasing prospect I had in view of conducting to America one of y^e best ships afloat with a cargo of about Twenty Thousand Pound Sterling of articles for y^e use of y^e army & navy all purchas d on acc^t of y^e State on y^e best terms & are chiefly on board Permit me now to enlarge on this business that thereby you may be able to Judge of y^e propriety of my application to you & to facilitate my departure—Easterly Winds & want of water prevented y^e ship (tho on her Broadside) getting over y^e shoals that are in y^e river upwards of seventy Miles distance from Amsterdam till y^e 30th of Oct^r last, & untill she was over those Shoals was oblig'd to keep her with a swept Hold or nothing in her so that we had every thing to take in after that from Amsterdam, this was nearly accomplish'd when y^e winter began to set in, that, & y^e Marines not arriving as expected compell'd us to get y^e Ship out of her Eminent danger of y^e Ice into y^e same winter quarters as y^e Dutch Men of War were in near y^e Texel, to accomplish this we was oblig'd to put into Lighters every thing on board except part of y^e Iron Ballast, this navigation being very Intricate & shallow, Cap^t John Joyner who cammands this Ship could not get her out into y^e Texel Road till abt y^e 12th of March since when he has been constantly employd in taking in his Bal-

last, Water, Provisions, Guns, Stores, & Cargo and getting y^e ship compleat for Sea, all those delays & disappointments part^y y^e extra expense of keeping twelve Lighters on daily pay from december till March (as y^e Goods could not be relanded) have accumulated to a larger sum than I could foresee would be necessary, thus was not provided with more funds than I presum'd would be needfull to pay y^e Ships disbursements till nov^r & dec^r last allways expecting that about that Period we should sail. to remedy these wants I have had recourse to friends to make some cash advances & have also disposd of some Goods I had procur'd for y^e State but those prov'd only momentary reliefs because our debts increas'd by our delays & because some of those friends press for a return of their advances, the ship has now every thing on board except a few articles of her cargo that can be ship'd in four days, all y^e Marines can be emb^d in fourteen or twenty days & as for every thing else I flatter my self y^e ship will bear inspecting with an officers Eye & found to be as compleat for sea as most ships are, Political obstacles I know of none but what are overcome part^y in Holland & it was no longer than last Monday that I requested His Excellency the duke de la Vauguyer y^e French Ambassadeur at y^e Hague to acq^t me if there was any objection at the French Court of this Ships going to America, his reply was as Candid as positive that there existed none, time does not admit my laying many circumstances before you that carry convincing proofs with them that no time has been lost, but every method in our power us'd to Expedite the Ship & when I assure you that was it not for our Pecuniary delays we should have been ready for sea as soon as one dutch Man of War that began fitting out y^e time we did tho they was in their own Country thus had facilities we could not experience, I trust we shall not be suppos'd to have lost any oppty, for dispatch & as it is I think we shall sail as soon as any of them. by y^e papers handed to your Excellency by M^r de Neufville & M^r Brailsford you will find sundry remarks not notic'd here & will also

find that with little or no Money of y^e States, we have brought y^e time very near that will produce to America a usefull ship & a number of Valuable Articles, It is with you Worthy Sir to put y^e finishing stroke to this business, & under these circumstances I feel some consolation that it is to a Gentleman of your reputation I lay as exact state of our case before willing to cherish y^e Hopes that if in your power you will aid your Country by relieving us, part^r if you want to ship out any quantity of Goods by what I conceive one of y^e best opptys in Europe, I therefore propose to your Excell^y to take such a share of her Cargo now on State acc^t as will am^t to as much as will totally extricate y^e Ship from debt & that they remain on b^d to be deliv'd according to your wish, these debts do not exceed Ten Thousand Pounds sterling, but if you think it will be no diff^s to y^e State if Congress receives all this Cargo, on that supposition I propose to you to take on y^e Continental acc^t every thing of Cargo on b^d & to pay me such advances as I want to clear y^e Ship, permit me further to suggest to you that supposing we was not in want of Money & that you wish'd to ship £20,000 Sterling of goods on Continental acc^t from Holland would it not be very agreable to Congress to receive these goods so early by such a favorable an oppty, surely it would, in that case as in similar ones in France y^e freight would have been to be paid in Holland & obstacles stated that now remove themselves, please also consider these Goods are bo^t on y^e best terms, most are ship'd & you can hereby sooner get such Goods to America as by any chance from any other Port then supposing this was A dutch or French ship laden for freight in Holland to America, would you not deem it a Convenient oppty to send out Goods, surely you would, if so, I humbly conceive there can exist no impropriety of your buying States Goods of me or similar Goods of any other Person, neither can such a Step be construed to a Preference or Partiality to any State or Person. Authentic Invoices will be produc'd to you at which cost I wish you to take them &

to advance y^e beforesaid Sum at such Periods as will be suitable to you & y^e Ships Creditors, this done Sir I know of no impediment to our Sailing in abt twenty five days for such part of y^e Continent as will answer best, Admit my observing that if possible I would wish this State of our Case to be confined to your department as it is not to every Eye I dare to expose our distress'd situation should I not be so happy as to meet your Aid it behoves me to State to you my then only Measures to be pursued which is to try & dispose of some of those Goods in Holl^d at what I can procure for them directly but if this cannot be done then to State matters to every one of those that have given a Credit to y^e State, get them to take their Goods back sell them that are paid for at what they will fetch & sell of all y^e Ships Stores, Provisions & Ammunition & I bought, thereout first pay y^e first officers & Men their Just Claims for their faithfull services & pay y^e residue to y^e State & ships Creditors, then deliver y^e Ship up to y^e Chevelier de Luxembourg conformable to his Contract with me, or leave her till y^e time expires where she is, thus thro dire necessity Abandon y^e business I have hitherto persever'd in with all y^e assiduity & Prudence I am Master of, little foreseeing that at my time of Life I am so near y^e Brink of becoming A Bankrupt on acct of y^e State I so much revere, this reluctant measure adopted I return directly home to lay y^e part^s of my Conduct during my absence before that Tribunal that only has a right to approve of or condemn my proceedings, that approbation is all y^e reward I ever sought or expected & untill that is denied, a suspension of opinion will be no more than y^e Justice I may venture to claim from Friends & those I have y^e Honour of being known to, I wish I may have explaind y^e needfull to you, if not, I have no other business here than to attend to enlarge thereon whenever it suits you, will therefore only add that y^e goods in question consist of——

Course & fine Cloths with Linings for y^e officers & Men of
the Army & Navy——

Blankets for d^o

Sail Cloth, Ravens duck & flemish Canvas for White Plains, Tents & Light Sails Hosiery, Shoes, Pins, Needles. Buttons, Hats, Milton Covelids, Course & fine Linnens Bolt Iron, Spikes & other nails, Iron Hoops Cordage, Anchors & A Variety of Slops—30,000 W^t of Gun Powder abt 750 Stand of Arms with A Variety of other Articles I do not recollect not having y^e Invoice with me, but are such as I deem'd would be very suitable for y^e State. I will not fail to try to persuade y^e Gentleⁿ whose Goods I had promised to take in at fifteen p^r C^t freight payable in Amsterdam to ship these Goods in another Bottom, & will with pleasure make all y^e room we possibly can for such fine Goods as you further wish to ship on Congress Acc^t may I crave your early reply as that only Guides my tarry here with all due respect & Esteem I have the Honour to be——

Your Excellencies———

Most Obed^t & most hble Serv^t

A. GILLON¹⁸

Commodore of y^e Navy of the
State of South Carolina

Paris 22^d April 1781

His Excellency

Coll JOHN LAURENS Esq^r

Minister Extraordinary at y^e Court of Versailles

from y^e United States of North America

Paris

Endorsed: from

A GILLON

Paris 22^d April 1781.

¹⁸ Since the publication of the sketch of Commodore Gillon in the January number of this magazine, the Editor has unearthed a few more facts about Commodore Gillon: By the convention of the people of South Carolina, held in Charleston in July, 1774, he was appointed a member of the "General Committee" of 99, which was practically the governing power in South Carolina from July, 1774, to June, 1775. He was elected lieutenant governor by the Legislature in August,

[21.]

Memorandum of Agreement between Lut. Col. Laurens Special Minister from the United American States on the part of the said States, and Commodore Gillon on the part of the State of South Carolina¹⁹

Commodore Gillon having represented to Col. Laurens in the most pointed terms that the Indian²⁰ a new Frigate of equal dimensions to a seventy four gun ship purchased for the term of three years by the State of South Carolina, now in port laden with a Cargo of Cloathing and naval supplies on account of the said state to the amount of about fifteen thousand pounds sterling compleatly armed rigged provisioned and manned except the number of two hundred and eighty marines long since engaged and daily expected to Join—and in every other respect fitted for sea—is reduced to the impossibility of sailing for the want of the sum of ten thousand pounds Sterling for the payment of debts contracted in port, and on a reimbursement of Money advanced by Mess^{rs} de Neufville & Co—and unless the assistance in Money above mentioned be obtained he will be reduced to the disgraceful and Melancholy necessity of unloading this ship and selling his Cargo at a ruinous loss to satisfy in part the demands of his Creditors of the State of South Carolina—in consequence of which the services of a ship whose force and peculiar good qualities

1783, in place of Richard Beresford, who had been elected a delegate to Congress, but declined. He was elected a delegate to Congress in March, 1784, retiring in February, 1785, when he was elected one of the commissioners for the speedy settlement of public accounts. He was elected a warden of Charleston for the 3rd Ward on Sept. 1, 1785, but a few weeks later was declared to have been unduly elected, and in the next race he was not elected.

¹⁹ See Sparks's *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution*, Vol. 9, p. 227. Wharton's *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, Vol. 4, p. 383.

²⁰ More properly the *South Carolina*.—See the January number of this Magazine, p. 32, note.

must render her a most valuable acquisition to the American Coasts, will be long suspended if not altogether lost—And the said Commodore Gillon offering by virtue of the powers vested in him to transfer the Cargo on board to Col Laurens on Continental account; Col Laurens has accepted his offer annexing certain conditions in order to conciliate the succour so pressingly required for the state with the general Interest. Conformably to which the following articles have been settled and agreed upon by the parties.

1st Commodore Gillon engages to deliver immediately on his arrival in holland, the original invoices of the supplies purchased on account of the State of South Carolina to such person as Col Laurens shall authorise to receive them—in order that the said person may select from the totality such articles as may be wanted for Continental service and reject the rest—

2^d Commodore Gillon warrants the said articles to be of the proper qualities, in their respective kinds—purchased at reasonable rates—and engages to cede them at the prime Cost, agreeably to the original invoices, for the use of the Continent to the full amount of the sum of ten thousand pounds sterling—

3^{dly} He engages to reland and exclude from his ship all private adventures whatever and by the greatest attention to his stowage, by reducing his provision to the quantity required in strict prudence to a voyage to Philadelphia by relanding and excluding such bulky articles of naval supplies as may not be comprehended in the choice, mentioned in the first article—and by every other means in his power to make the greatest quantity of vacant tonnage, for the reception of such supplies as Col Laurens shall order to be shipped from holland on Continental account—

4th Commodore Gillon engages to embark the said supplies with the greatest possible expedition—he repeats the most solemn assurances that the succour to be given in the manner hereafter mentioned will relieve him from every difficulty

and entirely remove every obstacle to his sailing and engages to proceed to sea in every respect compleatly fitted and manned by the twentieth day of May next at farthest.

5th The said Commodore Gillon engages to proceed without loss of time to Philadelphia which place he is to consider exclusively as his destination and it is understood that he will not steer for any other port but in case of unavoidable necessity, arising from storms, the chase of a superior Enemy or a succession of contrary winds, which would render his perseverance in the voyage to Philadelphia obnoxious to excessive delays in either Case he is to use his utmost efforts to arrive at the nearest friendly Port to Philadelphia—He is to proceed North about from the Texel unless a concurrence of favorable Circumstances renders the Channel passage perfectly safe and eligible—He engages not to vary his Course for the purpose of Cruising, nor any distant Chase that may involve delays, but to use all possible diligence to arrive at the port above mentioned, and deliver the supplies which he shall have on board on Continental Account to the order of Congress—

6 Col Laurens engages on his part that the amount of the Merchandize transferred to Continent, account shall be paid on bills of Exchange drawn by the Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States in Holland, on the Minister Plenipotentiary of the united states in France at six Months sight to the order of Commodore Gillon

7 The said Commodore Gillon for the consideration above mentioned hereby acknowledges the cession to Col Laurens of a quantity of the Merchandize now in his possession equal in value to the sum of ten thousand pounds sterling—and upon receipt of the bills is to sign receipts more particularly specifying the said transfer

Settled and agreed upon at Paris this twenty eighth day of April 1781—In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals

Witness

JOHN LAURENS

W: JACKSON

A GILLON

A true Copy Tho: PAINE

Endorsed by John Laurens : Mem. of Agreement
between L^t Col LAURENS &
Captain GILLON—

Endorsed by Henry Laurens : Memorandum of Agreement
between Col. LAURENS & Com^d
GILLON. settled at Paris
28th April 1781.

[22.]

Sir

I request you to proceed with all possible expedition to Amsterdam, and inform yourself minutely of the present situation and circumstances of the Frigate So Carolina, now under the command of Commodore Gillon—You will obtain from him immediately the authentic invoices of the Cargo purchased by him on account of the State of South Carolina—and select from them all such articles as may coincide in kind and quality with the Supplies required for the service of the United States—cause a new invoice to be made of the said articles with the addition of their prime costs—and have the proper bills of Lading executed by Cap^t Gillon—

You will use your utmost exertions to secure the punctual accomplishment of the engagements entered into by Com. Gillon & M^{rs} de Neufville—& have the necessary bills of Lading executed—for the additional Cargo to be ship'd. in Holland—

You will be particularly attentive to the shipment & security of a sum of specie to be transmitted by the So Carolina on Acc^t of the United States—for which you are to sign proper receipts to the persons charged with the delivery of it in Holland—farther instructions relative to this object will be transmitted by the first opportunity—

I request your inspection as far as circumstances will allow of the purchases to be made in Holland—You will be best able to judge upon the spot whether the frigate is capable of

receiving the whole quantity of supplies specified in the List delivered to Mr de Neufville—but my intention is that the purchases sh^d not extend beyond the capacity of the Frigate—

Your knowledge of the present circumstances of America and zeal for the service will prompt your utmost exertions in the dispatch which is above all essential in the execution of this business—

I have requested His Excell^y the Mr Plen. of the U. S. in Holland, to afford you his counsel and assistance which I am persuaded will be useful to you—You will keep me constantly advised by every post—that intervenes between your arrival and sailing—and take your passage on board the Frigate for America

Done at Paris this—28 April 1781

Endorsed ; Copy of a Letter from J. L.
To Captain JACKSON
Paris April 28. 1781.

[23.]

I have the honour of transmitting to Your Excellency Copies of a representation made to me by Commodore Gillon on the subject of the Frigate South Carolina—and a memorandum of articles settled and agreed upon between us—My motives for engaging in this business are—That the excellence of the conveyance enables me to transmit immediately a part of the specie destined for the United States, which would otherwise have been the object of a future and uncertain epoch—That the greatest part of her present Cargo consists in articles which I am directed to forward to America on Continental Account. That she will have a considerable vacancy for an additional Cargo of the same kind—that the said Cargo can be obtained immediately in Holland—and that the arrival of a ship of her force and peculiar good qualities on the American Coast will be a very valuable acquisition—

With respect to the State of So Carolina—there is a prospect of considerable advantage to her, from having her ships at sea, in condition to profit by cruising—and she will receive her share of the advantages that will result from the general interest, in common with the other members of the Union—

Mr J. de Neufville has engaged to provide and ship the additional Cargo, on continental account, agreeable to an Invoice delivered him by the 20th May on the most reasonable terms—the confidence placed in him by Your Excellency, was my only inducement for accepting the offer of his services on this occasion—Captain Jackson, Aide de Camp to General Lincoln,²¹ an officer of merit intelligence and activity—has at my request and from zeal for the Service undertaken the journey to Holland in order to accelerate as much as possible the whole of this business—I intreat Your Excellencys advice to this Gentleman, and it is with the confidence inspired for your distinguished public services that I solicit your protection and assistance, as far as may be required, in a matter the success of which is so essential to the interests of the United States—

It appeared to me advisable both for the sake of authenticity—and in order that a control should be placed in the most respectable hands—to trouble Your Excellency with drawing the Bills for the payment of the new purchases and the Cargo already on board—the former to be made payable to J de Neufville & Co—at six Months sight—and not to be drawn until the whole of the supplies are embarked, and the proper invoices and vouchers are delivered to Your Excell^y the latter to be made payable to Commodore Gillon at six Months Sight—and to be drawn upon his application—the whole to be addressed to our Minister plenipotentiary at this

²¹ William Jackson, sometime captain in the first regiment of South Carolina Continentals, and on this occasion secretary to Col. Laurens.

His account of Col. Laurens's services, which was largely drawn upon by Mr. James Barnes in his contribution to *McClure's Magazine* for December, 1899, was published in the second series of *Garden's Anecdotes*, p. 12 et seq.

Court—I expect to obtain two Millions of Livres to arrive in Holland in time to be transmitted by the South Carolina—Two millions more will be sent in a frigate destined to reconduct me, which I hope will sail in all the next month—Five Millions will be procured at Vera Cruz or the Havanna—to be conveyed by a frigate to be detached for that service from the french W. Indies—This is the distribution of pecuniary succours for the present moment—the epochs are to be fixed as near as possible for farther transmissions—

I should have had the honor of introducing myself to Your Excellency and announcing the objects of my mission by Mr Dana, but unluckily for me he left paris at a moment when I was closely occupied at Versailles—I have much to regret that my short stay in Europe will deprive me of an opportunity of cultivating a particular acquaintance with Your Excellency, whose public and private character have inspired me with so much veneration—it will in some degree console me, if Your Excelly will render me in any way useful to you in America, and favor me with your particular commands for that Country—

Endorsed : Copy of a Letter from

J LAURENS to

JOHN ADAMS Esquire

Paris April 28.—1781

Respecting Goods to be shipped

from Holland for the United

States—————²²

²² For the answer to this letter see vol. vii, p. 415, "Works of John Adams." (Boston, 1852) On page 14 of the January number of this magazine is printed a letter from John Laurens to the president of Congress, which Henry Laurens endorsed on the back as having been written in Dec. 1780 or Jan. 1781. In a foot-note to another letter, given on page 15 of the same number, I expressed a doubt as to the first letter ever having been sent. I have lately discovered that about the end of 1779 or the beginning of 1780 Col. Laurens was offered a commission as special envoy to Europe, but declined, and I am now of opinion that the letter given on page 14 of the January number was

[24.]

Addressed: The Honourable
Colonel LAURENS

The Honourable Colonel LAURENS
Paris

Sir

I am honoured with your polite Letter of the 20th Instant, inclosed in one from his Excellency B Franklin Esq. informing me that you have thought proper that the draft of 4444 Dollars remitted me by the Admiralty should be paid & his Excellency has advised me that he would duely honor my drafts for that amount

I have every thing ready to be shipt on board of the Active and I do not presume that they will encumber above 10 or 12 Tons—the rest of the Vessell which is about 20 Tons is much at your service, it is true I have already shipt that quantity of flints and old Arms on board but as these articles especially the last can be of very little service in America & that what you want to send will no doubt be articles much wanted; it would be more advisable to send them and leave out the former—this operation will not take above a day and therefore will occasion no delay—The Admiralty board say in their Letter to my house—“We would have you use your best endeavow to persuade Capt Barnes to proceed with the Active to this Place in which case you will address her Cargo to this board, but if he cannot be persuaded you will then address to the Navy board Eastern department in Boston”—

the letter declining that appointment. On page 163 of vol. vii of “Works of John Adams,” in a letter to William Carmichael, Adams says: “Young Laurens has refused to come to Europe; I suppose smitten with the charms of military glory, and foreseeing the war was turning to his town.” The war *turned* to Charleston about the beginning of 1780. Many complimentary references to Col. Laurens are to be found in the Adams letters by consulting the index to the set. Unlike Franklin, Adams also speaks well of Commodore Gillon.
—EDITOR.

we have done all we could to engage him to comply, but without success.—I mention this as it might not be equally convenient to load your stores for Boston and that you may consult with D franklin whether it would not be proper if your articles are for Philadelphia to give this Captain some gratification to engage him to change his destination—In the interim I beg leave to reiterate my offers of Services and to assure you that I am very respectfully

Your most humble & ob^t Servant

Sir J. D^t SCHWEIGHAUSER

Nantez 28 April 1781

Endorsed : M^r SCHWEIGHASER—Nantz.

28th April 1781.——

[25.]

NANTES

Addressed : L' honorable

Monsieur JEAN LAURENS

Colonel au service des Etats Unis

de l Amerique——

ches Monsieur Grand

Basquen

à Paris

to The Honourable Col: LAURENS

Paris

Sir

His Excellency B franklin Esq mentions in a letter he writes to our M Schweighauser that you have wrote us concerning the goods you want to load on board of the Active which Letter we have never received—& we only wait those articles to dispatch Cap Barnes—M Cigogne apothicary has some medecine which he says he is to load & your order & that our said Partner as Commercial agent is to give him a

receipt for the same, we have declined loading them 'till we have your directions

The departure of the post obliges us to finish this Letter & leaves us only time to assure you of the profound respect with which we are

Your humble & ob Servants

Sir ://: SCHWEIGHASER & DOBRÉE

Nantes 10 May 1781/

Endorsed by John Laurens : SCHWEIGHASER

10th May 1781

Endorsed by Henry Laurens : Letter from SCHWEIGHASER & Co

Nantes 10th May 1781—

Concerning goods to be shipped
on board the Active——

[26.]

NANTES

Addressed : L' honorable

Monsieur LAURENS

Ministre Extraordinaire des

Etats Unis de l' Amerique a

la Cour— Rue Richelieu

chés M Grand Hotel d' Angleterre

Banq^r / Paris

The Honorable Colonel LAURENS

Paris

Sir !

We have had the honor of writing you the 10 Instant and are since without any of your favors—Mr De la Ville is come to us this morn^g to engage us to receive from him——

60 or 90 Barrells of Tin cont^g each 450 Sheets

60 or 90 Chests of Tin cont^g each 225 Sheets

and about 3000 ^{lb} of Wire——

which his Correspondents Mess^{rs} Sabatier fils & Després write him to deliver us per your order; having no such directions from you we have given him the same answer as to M Cigogne the Apothicary & earnestly request your immediate Commands the Active being detained here solely on your account— We have had the old arms unloaded seing that the articles offered us for you are more than sufficient to load this Vessell and that she may not be delayed when we receive your orders—

Cap Barnes means to go if your goods are loaded in time with the next convoy which will sail from the Isle of daix fm the 20 to the last of this month——

We have the honor to be with the highest Consideration & respect

Your most hbl & ob: Servants

Sir ://: SCHWEIGHAUSER & DOBREE

Nantes 12 May 1781

Endorsed : SCHWEIGHASER & C^o

Nantes 12th May 1781—

[To be continued in the next number of this Magazine.]

A CHEROKEE WAR DOCUMENT.

[The following interesting document, pertaining to the Cherokee war in South Carolina in 1760-61, was recently sent by Mr. A. Landfear Norrie, of New York, through Mr. Pembroke Jones, of the same city, to Mr. W. D. Porcher, of Charleston, to be by him transmitted to Governor McSweeney for the use and benefit of students of the history of this State. Governor McSweeney presented it to this Society.]

George R.

Whereas it appears by the annexed Report of the Comptrollers of the Accounts of Our Army that the sum of Four thousand five hundred seventy three pounds ten shillings and four pence is due unto the late Sir James Colebrooke Baronet